

Strategy – Training for Law Enforcement Officers on Bicycle and Pedestrian Laws and Local Law Enforcement Strategies to Improve Safety

General Description

The *Motor Vehicle Laws of North Carolina* includes many statutes that define bicyclist and pedestrian rights and responsibilities and the legal status of these modes of transportation. Other statutes address motorist responsibilities in relation to these modes. Case law further clarifies these laws. Unfortunately, there is widespread lack of knowledge about these statutes, not only among the general public, but even among many law enforcement officers. This gap in knowledge can result in lack of proper law enforcement and, in some cases, improper assignment of fault against bicyclists and pedestrians and when a crash occurs. By enforcing applicable laws, motorists will become more aware of how to properly “Share the Road” with bicyclists and pedestrians, and bicyclists and pedestrians will become more aware of the laws that apply to them.

The Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation (DBPT) has compiled all relevant statutes and has produced a publication entitled *A Guide to North Carolina bicycle and Pedestrian Laws*. In addition, the DBPT web site includes a listing of relevant statutes as well as a link to an on-line version of the above referenced publication. Despite availability of this information in a readily accessible format, many law enforcement officers have not been exposed to this information. In most communities, there is little or no effort to enforce the laws governing bicyclist / pedestrian / motorist interactions.

This strategy focuses on raising the awareness of law enforcement officers, both to the existing statutes related to bicyclists and pedestrians and the availability of relevant materials. In addition, this project would encourage Chiefs of Police, Sheriffs and the Highway Patrol to take a proactive role in focusing enforcement efforts in these areas. By having knowledge about and enforcing relevant laws, law enforcement efforts can change behaviors in a community, thus making it safer to bicycle and walk.

Technical Attributes

Target	All law enforcement agencies and law enforcement officers, including campus police.
Expected Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise the awareness of applicable motorist, bicyclist and pedestrian laws among law enforcement officers.• Increase enforcement of applicable laws; make enforcement of these laws a higher priority.• Decrease incidences of improper assignment of fault to bicyclists and pedestrians in crash situations.
Keys to Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians.• Buy-in and a proactive role by law enforcement agencies.• Media support for local awareness campaigns.• Acceptance of increased enforcement of applicable laws by the general public.

Potential Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing opportunities to present at conferences and seminars. • Lack of support from local law enforcement agencies. • Inability of local law enforcement agencies to implement due to personnel shortages. • Securing cooperation from the court system to process charges against motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.
Appropriate Measures and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing funds to produce sufficient quantities of relevant materials • Numbers of handbooks distributed to law enforcement agencies. • Number of opportunities to present at workshops and seminars. • Number of communities that implement enforcement strategies. • Increases in number of citations written locally. • Anecdotal information on behavior changes.
Associated Needs	• Printing of existing materials and development of new materials.
Organizational, Institutional, and Policy Issues	Support from state law enforcement organizations, the Governor's Highway Safety Program and other agencies that work with law enforcement agencies.
Issues Affecting Implementation Time	Scheduling of annual conferences and the timing of local initiatives.
Costs	Cost for this strategy should be minimal.
Training	Training needs exist primarily in providing the information to law enforcement agencies and making presentations at conferences and seminars.
Legislative Needs	None